

TEACHERS AND LIBRARIANS

Collaborate

IN LESSON STUDY

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Collaboration between librarians and classroom teachers results in increased student achievement and turns the librarian into a valued partner in lesson design. We struggle to get teachers to go from dropping students off in the library with instructions to "teach them research," when we are really hoping to become partners in instruction with those teachers. Lesson Study in the Bend-La Pine Schools has been a great way to allow classroom teachers and librarians to plan, teach, and reflect on instruction and student learning. As librarian Amy Wilde said, "Lesson Study has opened the collaboration door for me as a librarian. I now feel the classroom teachers recognize my strengths and are willing to work together to share instruction. The Lesson Study experience was well worth the effort" (Wilde 2009).

Lesson Study was highlighted in the review by Linda Darling-Hammond of best practices in professional development (Darling-Hammond et al. 2009). Lesson Study follows a prescribed protocol:

1. *planning the lesson*
2. *teaching the lesson*
3. *reflection-assessment of the lesson*
4. *reteach*

Lesson Study is a core professional development model used in Japanese schools. It is credited with the shift from "teaching as telling" to "teaching for understanding." During Lesson Study a group of teachers are released for the entire school day to allow time to plan a lesson, go into the classroom to teach it, and meet to reflect on student learning. Teachers use the reflection data to improve the lesson and, eventually, to reteach it.

Two of the classroom teachers in the study had come from the business world and said that in their previous work, training took place with teams, while in schools teachers close the classroom doors and usually work and plan in isolation.



Teachers use the Lesson Study cycle to strengthen five key learning pathways:

- increase knowledge of subject matter and instruction
- develop a keener "vision to see students"
- strengthen collegial and personal learning structures
- connect daily practice to long-term goals
- develop strong motivation to improve their practice (Lewis 2003)

Lesson Study has quickly become the preferred model of professional development in the Bend-La Pine Schools. The stage was set in Bend-La Pine last year when administrators, teacher-leaders, and librarians began learning to become a high-performing Professional Learning Community (PLC) as described in the work of Richard DuFour, Rebecca DuFour, and Robert Eaker (2008). The collaborative Lesson Study process is a logical extension of the work of professional learning communities.

In *Revisiting Learning Communities at Work* (2008), Richard DuFour, Rebecca DuFour and Robert Eaker describe professional learning communities as collaborative cultures with a "laser-like focus" on learning. They are committed to continuous improvement with a results orientation. In their model they suggest that educators work together to answer these three questions:

1. What do we want our students to know and do well?
2. How will we know if each student is learning?
3. How will we provide support when some students don't learn or provide enrichment for students who are already proficient?

Professional Development for Teacher/Librarians

Last fall Bend's school librarians attended the state library conference and heard David Loertscher speak about creating instructional units that require higher-level thinking. They decided to form a professional learning community (PLC) to read and discuss his book, *Beyond Bird Units: Thinking and Understanding in Information-Rich and Technology-Rich Environments* (2007). At the time they agreed that there was a common need to improve collaboration between library and classroom teachers to use information and technology in more meaningful ways. Lesson Study became the vehicle for improving that collaboration.

As Bend's district librarian, I invited Jody Wiencek, an educational consultant, to help me initiate Lesson Study for a group of teachers and librarians in January 2009. We planned to help them learn to integrate AASL's *Standards for the 21st-Century Learners* and NETS•S national educational technology standards (ISTE 2007) with state content standards and English language proficiency standards during the Lesson Study cycle. We set aside four days during the year with six librarians and two classroom teachers teaching seventh- and eighth-grade humanities classes. Jody and I facilitated the planning, reflecting, problem-solving, and decision making process. We coached the Lesson Study process by posing questions to engage teachers in reflective thinking.

Setting the Stage

Because Lesson Study is based on peer learning, we spent the first morning describing our educational backgrounds, explaining how we had become educators and developing a sense of community. After sharing

our personal journeys in education, we acknowledged our common desire to grow professionally and improve instruction. Then everyone read "Lesson Study Overview" (NWREL 2008) individually highlighting words, phrases and sentences to share with the group, a process we use regularly in our professional meetings. Next we completed a Comprehensible Teaching & Learning Self Assessment (Wiencek 2009) and reflected on our own teaching behaviors using the results. Each of us selected areas of strength and areas to be refined, and narrowed that down to an individual instructional goal to work on. During each lesson, some observers would collect data about that goal for the teacher. This form of data collection, called "selective verbatim," would also be used to collect data on student behaviors and interactions, and on student nonverbal behaviors. We were to think of ourselves as camcorders, simply recording data without making inferences or evaluations. An objective note taker might record, "The student looked at the desk and did not respond to the question," avoiding inferences like "the bored student" or "the shy student." To practice creating this written transcript, we broke into small groups to teach a skill, anything from yoga to surfing. This method of collecting data on what was said and observed during a lesson is useful for assessment and reflection on the effectiveness of the lesson and student learning.

Our final preparatory activity was to gain a foundation in English Language Learning (ELL) using the "Stages of English Language Development" (Wiencek 2009). Each classroom teacher provided information on the language proficiency level of specific students while Jody Wiencek provided expertise with ELL populations to help us identify and develop goals for bilingual students. We created charts

of ELL student learning behaviors, matched them to teaching strategies appropriate for each proficiency level, and posted the charts in our workroom as a permanent reminder of ways to teach ELL students. Then we looked at stages of language acquisition in relation to each ELL student in the class and set goals using state English language proficiency content standards. This activity opened our eyes to the way instruction is differentiated for ELL students. In addition to academic and linguistic goals, we chose to include one social goal, that of encouraging all students to participate, and matched it with the Think, Pair, Share strategy. During the lesson, some observers would focus on observing ELL students, while others would gather data on the implementation of the teacher's identified goal.

Planning the Lesson

Developing a lesson collaboratively brings incredible energy, resources, and knowledge to the task of lesson design. The classroom teacher provided us with the context for the lesson: students' background knowledge, other recent lessons and activities, the appropriate topic, and the relevant state content standard, in this case from social studies (ODE 2009). The team rewrote the standard in kid-friendly language on a poster, hung it in the classroom, and referred to throughout the lesson. Our AASL/NETS standard, "Locate, organize, evaluate, synthesize and ethically use information," was posted in the computer lab. In reflection later, one teacher wrote, "Posting the standard keeps the lesson focused, but equally important is reading the standard together as a class, revisiting it during the class, and finishing with it at the end. This makes the students accountable for the standard."



Arlene Watkins shares the social studies content standard with the librarians.

We focused on social studies standards in these lessons. For example, the seventh-grade class was studying Africa and working toward the standard to "Identify economic, cultural, and environmental factors that affect population and predict how the population would change as a result." Students were already familiar with Follett's Destiny Library Resources, including WebPath Express, and with OneSearch databases. Students would be asked to research information and images on African countries using these online tools, then organize, synthesize, and ethically use that information in a Comic Life poster. During this planning stage we also designed:

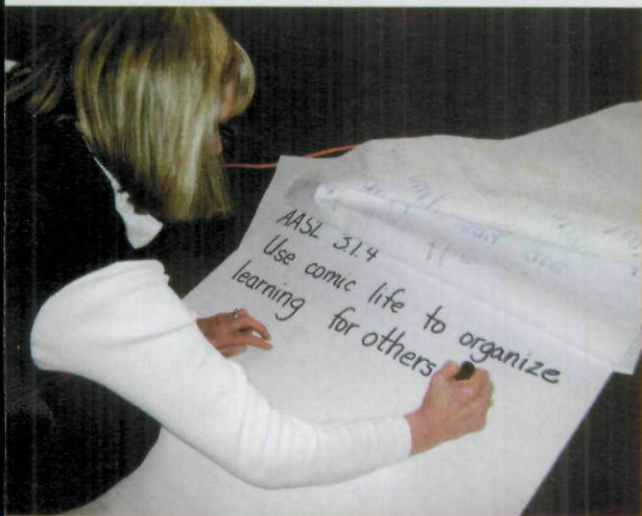
- a checklist for students to use when organizing their assignment and research steps;
- a rubric for the Comic Life poster that would include images, captions, and citations that demonstrated a grasp of the social studies standard;
- a vocabulary poster (for the classroom) of words identified in the lesson such as ethical use, citation, caption, currency, import/export;
- a written lesson plan.

Since we wanted students to be taught by a combination of a teacher and librarian, pairs of teachers and librarians volunteered to work together—the classroom teacher to present the social studies content and the librarian to teach the research and technology sections. Everyone would get a chance to both teach and observe.

During the Lesson

Each lesson included a teacher who welcomed the students, introduced the lesson standards, shared the goals and the agenda, and overviewed the rubric and checklist. A librarian led a discussion on the ethical use of information and correct citations. The classroom teacher built on background knowledge, then bridged into the social studies lesson. The ninety-minute block allowed time for student discussion, collaboration, research in the computer lab, and work on Comic Life posters.

As the teacher and librarian presented the lesson, the team collected data on clipboards, watching the assigned students and recording behaviors related to their respective learning goals. Two team members were assigned to record observations



Linda Bilyeu writes the AASL standard to post in the classroom.

on the teacher and librarian, and their progress on the selected teaching goals, while the rest observed students. Observers did not speak or interact with students; in fact, students were instructed to just ignore their presence.

The last few minutes of class were used to review the agenda, discuss what was accomplished, and focus again on vocabulary and standards. Students were producing work that would be evaluated, so the checklist and rubric were collected to reflect on later.

Lesson Reflections— Assessment and Data

The presenting teacher and librarian shared how they thought the lesson went and any problems they observed. At first each person offered general perceptions of the progress made toward his or her own personal teaching goal. Then the two team members who observed the teacher and librarian shared what they recorded about each personal teaching goal. In the past, when asked about a lesson, teachers tended to respond with general comments like, "I thought that went well," or "That didn't go well." By providing observable data, the teacher was now able to identify exactly when teaching was effective.

Next, observing teachers reported on the students' data beginning with English Language Learners and including other observations on behavior. Was the social goal met, i.e., was discussion time shared by all students? We evaluated and shared the data on the student work generated during the lesson. Our

comments on the student products (the completed checklists and posters) went beyond whether the students had completed the assignment, to whether the poster demonstrated a grasp of the standard. Teachers reflected on whether the lesson actually fit students' prior knowledge and level of understanding. Were the students interested and engaged? How could the lesson be changed to improve student success? Did the ELL students meet their goals or should accommodations be included in the lesson? The whole group gave suggestions and ideas that focused on student learning. Problems with the lessons were seen as challenges to be shared and solved, not failures. We were motivated to improve instruction because the team was responsible, not just one teacher.

Next Steps

Lesson Study allows classroom teachers and librarians to work together collaboratively on lesson planning.

The classroom teachers in our study developed a clear understanding of what librarians have to offer—not only resources, but teamwork in lesson design and instruction. One of the journal articles we read together during our Lesson Study cycle was "What Does It Really Look Like When Students are Learning in the Library Media Center?" (Zmuda 2008). This reading produced an "aha" moment in understanding the role of librarians in assisting classroom teachers and students in designing research assignments that encourage deeper thinking, making connections, analyzing evidence, developing ideas using information, drawing conclusions, and refining work.

During one Lesson Study day we compared the BIG6 information problem solving process with other standards from AASL, ISTE NETS•S, and content areas. After reading "For the Best Answers, Ask Tough Questions" (Valenza 2000), we worked on asking questions starting with "Which one," "How," "What if," "Should," and "Why." During Lesson Study teachers said that they wanted to develop their ability to ask deeper questions during the research process. Librarians were quick to point to the AASL's *Standards for the 21st-Century Learner* that support the importance of questioning during the research process:

"1.1.3 Develop and refine a range of questions to frame the search for new understanding.

Teacher Arlene Watkins commented, "Lesson Study was the most valuable professional development I have ever experienced. I have gone to conferences and workshops that tell me how to teach, but Lesson Study guides the instruction to how students learn" (2009).

1.2.1 Display initiative and engagement by posing questions and investigating the answers beyond the collection of superficial facts.

1.2.4 Maintain a critical stance by questioning the validity and accuracy of all information" (2007, 4).

Collaboration with classroom teachers during Lesson Study has raised the visibility of our school librarians as instructional leaders in the district, increased their time in curricular work, and promoted their participation in departmental PLCs. Good news spreads quickly, and we have requests for more Lesson Studies. We plan to continue Lesson Study this year with librarians working with classroom teachers in their home schools. Some schools will use site-improvement time for lesson planning and reflection. In other cases we are working on grants to help fund the cost of substitutes for Lesson Study days.

Dr. William Rhoades, chief academic officer for Bend-La Pine Schools, is an enthusiastic supporter of our work. "In all my years as an educator, I have never experienced a more powerful model of professional development than Lesson Study. The model incorporates all we know about what makes a difference in influencing teacher practice." He notes that it puts our learning about standards and best practices "in real time"—in the classroom, with students. He believes that Lesson Study has become "the way professional development happens in our district" (2009). Keith Curry Lance's research in Oregon shows a relationship between quality library programs and student achievement (Lance, Rodney, and Hamilton-Pennell 2001). We have seen Lesson Study validate the role of school librarians as instructional partners and provide specific evidence of their positive impact on student achievement.



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She is a member of ALA, AASL, YALSA, Oregon Association of School Libraries, and the Oregon Library Association. She was guest editor for the OASL's spring issue of the *Interchange*, the *Journal of the Oregon Association of School Libraries* and has been selected Oregon District Librarian of the Year (2009).

Librarians Amy Wilde and Eila Overcash design the rubric for the comic life poster.



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